

# Programs of Distinction

*"Communicating best practices and high quality programs of 4-H Youth Development, in a peer-evaluated format, to help others improve their work in education and youth development."*

## What are Programs of Distinction?

Programs of Distinction are a collection of program descriptions that reflect the high quality of 4-H youth development programs that are occurring in communities across the United States. It is supported by 4-H system partners and coordinated through National 4-H Headquarters and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES).

Programs of Distinction represent outstanding examples of programs that:

- Exhibit strong program development and contribute to the youth development body of knowledge
- Convey new ideas, materials, or innovative methods related to positive youth development OR
- Represent long term program efforts and impact data over an extended period of time
- Demonstrate changes in knowledge, behaviors, attitudes or aspirations of 4-H youth and adults

## Why Programs of Distinction?

Scholarship is defined as intellectual work whose significance is validated by one's peers, whose relevance is valued by those for whom it is intended, and that is communicated to others so that human knowledge advances and so others can improve their educational programs.

In a recent survey of NAE4-HA state presidents, State 4-H Program Leaders and Extension administrators, 90% of respondents reported that scholarship (as defined above) is critical to the professional development of Extension 4-H educators. Over 75% of respondents agreed that 4-H is an essential part of the land grant university mission and that, 4-H educators have the additional responsibility of scholarship or communicating best practices of positive youth development so that others can learn and apply it to their work.

Yet in the same survey, only 36% of respondents agreed that 4-H educators frequently *participate* in scholarly activity in their communities, across the states, regionally, nationally and even internationally. Furthermore, 48% agreed that 4-H educators are less inclined to *communicate* their work broadly for other to learn from and apply.

The Programs of Distinction is designed to help 4-H professionals to:

- Better understand the nature of scholarship in their work
- Submit program outcomes through a peer-evaluated format
- Communicate the high quality of 4-H youth development programs that are occurring in communities across the United States
- Assist others in improving their practices in positive youth development.

## What are the Characteristics of a Program of Distinction?

The following characteristics are examples of what represents a Program of Distinction:

- Teamwork, collaborative or cross-disciplinary work is evident
- Planned education efforts are based on expressed needs
- Stages of program planning are evident: clear objectives, appropriate delivery methods, development/use of curricula and other educational materials, evaluation which documents impact, communication of impact and validation by peers
- Demonstrates a high level of expertise, evidence of originality, or sustainability
- Demonstrates measurable, positive outcomes
- Is replicable

## How will the Programs of Distinction be accessible?

Programs of Distinction will be available through an on-line searchable database on the 4-Husa.org website, CYFERnet and related sites. The central database will feature selected Programs of Distinction, author recognition, and full recognition to the author's state and institution. Because of the continuous submission process, new content will be readily available. A Programs of Distinction cover page template will also be available for developing reports, media press kits and impact reports to funding sources.



## The Submission Process

Programs of Distinction can be submitted two ways:

- 1) Submitted directly from the author or
- 2) By recommendation from the State 4-H Program Leader

Beginning September 1, 2004, manuscripts are accepted on a continuous basis. All submissions must be submitted electronically. More information on the submission process will be communicated as it becomes available.

## The Review Process

Programs of Distinction are peer-reviewed by a blind review. The review team will be comprised of 4-H youth development educators and other professionals familiar with the field of youth development. Each Program of Distinction entry will be reviewed by 3 reviewers. The goal of the peer review is to make sure there is evidence of sound programming while helping the authors understand the characteristics of scholarship in youth development.

The Programs of Distinction will be reviewed as follows:

1. A set of criteria that consistent with other peer reviewed processes is used by reviewers to evaluate program entries submitted.
2. A numerical rating for each criterion (based on a total of 100 points) will be assigned and comments will be provided.
3. Submissions will be reviewed and recommended as follows:
  - Publish as a designated "Program of Distinction";
  - Recommend minor revisions
  - Recommend major revisions
  - Reject

If authors are asked to revise and resubmit manuscripts, then the revision may be sent for another round of reviews.

Top "Program of Distinction" entries will be selected for invited presentations and/or poster sessions at the annual NAE4-HA conference. The number of entries will be at the discretion of the

## Criteria for Evaluation

The criteria for Programs of Distinction are reviewed from two lens: program content and readability. Numerical ratings based on a total of 100 points will be assigned. Comments will be provided as appropriate.

### Program Content (70 points)

#### 1. Importance

- Does the program warrant inclusion as a Program of Distinction? Does it represent something that 4-H educators, colleagues and funders should know?

#### 2. Innovation

- Is it innovative and original? Does it describe something that has not been widely done?

#### 3. Program Description and Design

- Are the planned educational efforts based on needs assessment and relevant trends? Is the targeted audience clearly identified? Is teamwork or collaboration evident? Are the stages of the intellectual process evident (clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, effective preparation, significant results and reflective critique)?
- Program Outcomes and Impacts: (Describes short-term, mid-term or long-term outcomes. What happened as a result of the program?)
- Program Evaluation: Process indicators: Were the activities conducted as planned? Did the target audience express satisfaction?
- Program outcome indicators: Did the participants demonstrate the desired level of knowledge and skills increase, enhanced awareness, or improved practices or behaviors expected for the program?

### Readability (30 points)


#### 1. Interest: Captures and holds readers attention

#### 2. Comprehension: Uses easy to understand language: flows well.

#### 3. Development: Paragraphs and sentences are appropriately sequenced and constructed to support the central idea and conclusions.

#### 4. Mechanics: Uses acceptable standards of spelling and grammar.

- Graphics: Tables, graphs or photographs are accurate and appropriate



## Submission Format

Maximum length: 1,000 words, plus tables and graphics.

- Title of the Program
- Rationale for Program
- Program Description and Design
- Knowledge and Research Base Used for Program Content and Design (include citations)
- Targeted Audience
- Program Outcomes and Impacts
- Program Evaluation  
(Description of procedures and findings providing evidence that program achieved its targeted outcomes)
- Suggestions for Replication of Program in other settings
- Source of Funding
- Contact Person for Additional Information